



THE HOMECOMING QUEEN

BY
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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

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The world premiere of THE HOMECOMING QUEEN was presented by Atlantic Theater Company (Neil Pepe, Artistic Director; Jeffory Lawson, Managing Director) in New York City on January 10, 2018. It was directed by Awoye Timpo, the scenic design was by Yu-Hsuan Chen, the costume design was by Ntokozo Fuzunina Kunene, the lighting design was by Oona Curley, the sound design was by Amatus Karim-Ali, and the production stage manager was Gwendolyn M. Gilliam. The cast was as follows:

KELECHI Mfoniso Udofia
PAPA Oberon K.A. Adjepong
BEATRICE Mirirai Sithole
OBINNA Segun Akande
CHORUS Ebbe Bassey, Vinie Burrows,
Patrice Johnson, Zenzi Williams

A workshop production of THE HOMECOMING QUEEN was presented by New York Stage and Film & Vassar at the Powerhouse Theater, Summer 2017.

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THE VILLAGE

KELECHI

The only daughter

An Igbo gal

An American

A best-selling novelist

A Pulitzer Finalist

Unwell

Kelechi speaks with a very colloquial American accent

But she can go in and out of her native Igbo accent

PAPA GODWIN

A father

A proud Igbo Man

Stern

Gruff

But not without humor

The Fading Patriarch

Sick

Speaks English with a heavy Igbo accent

BEATRICE/THE GIRL

“A cousin”

A house girl

The youngest

Someone’s daughter

Says little but knows much

Sharp as a tack

Igbo accent

OBINNA

An Igbo man

Has lived many years in London

The former servant of the Ekejubas

A big man now

But once a house boy

Speaks with a British/Igbo accent

THE WOMEN

Igbo women

The gossips

The prophets

The lineage

They are daughters, aunties, and mothers

They are Kelechi's ghosts

Their numbers grow throughout the play

Always singing

Know all things

WHERE

Nigeria

Owerri

Imo State

Mbaise

Chokoneze

The Ekejuba Compound

Papa Godwin's Home

The porch

The backyard

(There is a well there)

The living room

His bedroom

WHAT TIME

A fictional today

Usually at the crack of dawn

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Ummm...
this is about
trauma
and home
and connection
and lack thereof
and why we can't love the way we really want to
and how we write about the love we'd like to have
and regrets
and events that change us
or don't really
I wanted to write about culpability
and revenge
but this came instead
who knows, it may still be about all that stuff too

THE HOMECOMING QUEEN

Scene 1 or You Are Welcome

Lights slowly come up on a sunrise.

It is like most.

A rooster crows.

We see the faint shadows of women at the front porch of a large stone home.

They are a mix of ages young and old.

Inside the home

An old man travels down a long stairwell to his throne with great trouble

A young girl prepares food in her kitchen and sets up the living area.

The women outside are talking amongst themselves and gossiping.

They are Igbo women

With all the signs of life and prayers in them.

In the midst of the gossiping, the eldest woman's voice pierces through.

THE ELDEST. *(Sings.)*

It has been toooooo long...

THE WOMEN.

but I knew You'd bring her back

THE ELDEST.

oooooh God

THE WOMEN.

*oh my Gooooo
so loyal You are
sooo joyful You are
Nigeria's daughter is back
back back back
oh...
oh...*

ALL.

*oh...my daughter is home oh
oh...my daughter is home
and I pray...
yes I pray...
she stays...
yes ooh—*

The joy is interrupted when we hear the sound of a car pulling up and a car door slamming and the faint sound of a very American voice haggling with her ride. It is Kelechi.

KELECHI. (*Offstage.*) Jesus, how much?

In U.S. or naira?

Fine. Take it. Just fucking take it.

No, don't worry I'll carry my own bag

Sonofa—

She enters, well coiffed, carrying bags onto the porch as the rest of the women stare.

Oh.

Hi everyone

...

They say nothing, a long uncomfortable pause as they stare at her blankly and with disapproval.

Hello?

How are

ALL of you?

Hello?

Is this thing on?

Uh
It's me

She points to herself.

Ke-le-chi
Do you remember me?
Godwin's daughter
I'm...
Uhhhhh

.....

Ummmm
Kedu?*

THE WOMEN. Eh-hehn!! Odimma!**

*They gather round her. She does her best job of being distant
but not disrespectful.*

AN AUNTIE. Wetin you bring me, me my sistah?

KELECHI. Bring you?

Umm

I'm a starving artist.

ANOTHER WOMAN. Nonsense gal

We know you!

Famous writah!

As they attempt to rifle through her bags:

KELECHI. Hey, don't touch that.

Is my father here?

I don't have a key.

I said don't touch that.

They grab her thighs.

A COUSIN. Hey! She dey strong oh

"See, she is strong."

They grab her arm.

ANOTHER AUNTIE. she is getting too big
See, Fatima—

* *keh-do*, How are you?

** *aw-do-mah*, I'm fine

KELECHI. I see we still have no need for personal space.
Hey, did you just call me fat?

ANOTHER WOMAN. See her arm.

You tink sey you be man?

“You think you are a man?”

The women laugh.

They touch her bottom.

THE ELDEST. See her nyash.*

Helty, helty!

“It’s very healthy!”

They grab her breasts.

She aggressively slaps their hands away.

KELECHI. Okay...

That’s enough...

Stop

Stop

HAFIA!**

Silence.

Where is Papa?

A melodic chorus of teeth-sucking from the women.

I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to yell Auntie.

I’m just...

I’m tired.

Jet lag.

You understand?

Sorry.

Ummmm

Ndo***

Is that how you say that?

That’s how you say that right?

Umm

* *nn-yash*, Booty

** *haff-EE-yuh*, Stop

*** *nn-doe*, Sorry

Do any of you have the key?

Silence. They stare at her blankly.

Okay then...

I guess I'll just...

She knocks.

She knocks harder.

AN AUNTIE. You are home Nne*

The door is open.

It is always open.

KELECHI. Deep.

Well...

I guess I'll just—

A young woman swings open the door.

She is modestly made up.

Her skin is dark.

Her hair is short.

It is hard to tell if she is an adult or child.

BEATRICE. Kelechi

You have arrived eh?

You are most welcome—

Kelechi breezes past her.

KELECHI. Dad!!!

Dad!!

DAAADD!

PAPA. Who is this *daaaaaad* you speak of?

*An old man sits in a glorious kinglike chair with a carved staff
at his hand.*

KELECHI. Seriously Dad, is the *Coming to America* chair necessary?

PAPA. You like it.

I had it built.

I thought

why not

Am I not a chief

* *nn-nay*, a feminine pet name

THE HOMECOMING QUEEN

by Ngozi Anyanwu

2 men, 6 women (flexible casting)

At fifteen years old, Kelechi left Nigeria for the United States, leaving her family and her culture behind. Fifteen years later, she is now a best-selling novelist and must return to Nigeria to care for her ailing father. Before she can say goodbye, however, she must relearn the traditions she had wiped from her memory. Kelechi's homecoming soon becomes a head-on collision with her culture, trauma, family history, and the love of those who never forgot her.

"...wrings all the pleasure possible out of its familiar tropes even as it revamps their meaning entirely. ...a marvelous three-act opera in the blank space between question and answer."

—**The New York Times**

"Better than any play I've seen, THE HOMECOMING QUEEN captures the everyday theater we perform to convince ourselves and those around us of who we really are." —**TheaterMania.com**

"...the Nigerian setting isn't the only thing fresh and original about this play. ...[Kelechi's] scenes with [Obinna] are subtly and sufficiently revelatory. What's more, even the most obvious plot points come off as fresh and somehow surprising, thanks to the...excellent writing. ...a vividly theatrical experience."

—**CurtainUp.com**

Also by Ngozi Anyanwu
GOOD GRIEF

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